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range of the Rocky Mountains south of the 49th parallel does not furnish one single practicable pass, while that called the Vermilion Pass, in the direct line, is in British territory, and does not exceed 4944 feet in altitude. Dr. Hector describes it as "not presenting any difficulty whatever to the construction of a railway, connecting the fertile prairies of the Saskatchewan with the auriferous valleys of British Columbia."

I think I shall abundantly prove, by the following extracts from a letter written by a distinguished member of this Society (Captain Richards, of the surveying-ship *Hecate*, in reply to an address from the corporation of New Westminster), the excellence of that port as a point of departure:—

"Her Majesty's Surveying Ship, 'Hecate,' off New Westminster,
October, 30th, 1860.

"... However highly you may estimate our services, it is yet to natural causes alone that the Fraser River owes its immunity from dangers and difficulties, almost always incident to Bar harbours. Effectually sheltered and protected as it is, in common with the coast of British Columbia, by the natural breakwater which the sister colony affords, your noble river is accessible at *all times of tide* to vessels of from 18 to 20 feet draught and 1000 tons.

"It is free from risk of life and property in a higher degree than any river I am acquainted with on the western side of this continent; and when a light-ship is stationed at the Sand Heads, or the entrance marked by permanent buoys, the seaman may guide his vessel through at *all times* with ease and safety."

10—*Ascent of Um Shaumur, the Highest Peak of the Sinaitic Peninsula, 1862.* By the Rev. T. J. PROUT, M.A., F.G.S., Student and late Censor, Christ Church, Oxford.*

THE mountain Um Shaumur, the loftiest and grandest in the peninsula of Sinai, is situated about 12 miles south-south-west of Gebel Katherin, but from the rugged nature of the intervening country, a somewhat circuitous journey of 10 or 12 hours' duration is required to reach it. The mountain rises precipitously in three peaks or base-tops, of which the western is considerably the highest (say 300 feet above the central, and 100 feet above the eastern peak). The height of the western peak above the sea has been given at 9200 feet; but I cannot vouch for the correctness of the statement; and indeed all figures in this account must be understood as approximative, as we had no means with us of taking accurate measurements. The camel-road to the mountain, from the Convent of St. Catherine, lies first of all in a south-easterly direction up the Wady Shu'eib, and along the track leading to Shurm, for about two hours; and then, turning more to the southward, winds through rather a dull valley as far as regards scenery, but possessing some interest geologically from the extensive deposits of recent sandstone and conglomerate which have been formed along its bed by the wearing away of the mountains above. About two hours more, at the ordinary rate of camel-travelling, bring us to some high ground at the upper end of this valley, from whence we obtain a fine view full in front of the cone-shaped "Jebel-el-

* A narrative of a previous ascent of one of the minor peaks of Um Shaumur, accompanied by a sketch of the mountain, has been forwarded to the Society by the Rev. Frederick Howlett.—ED.

Odha." Descending from the height on the further side, we enter the Wady Rahabeh—a wady of the same general character as the last—and in other two hours arrive at an Arab resting-place, under shelter of some fallen rocks on the western side of the wady. Not far from this spot, but more in the centre of the valley, are several Arab storehouses or magazines—desolate-looking buildings of stone rudely and loosely put together, and furnished respectively with a single entrance of about a yard square in size. Whenever the Arabs to whom these magazines belong, deposit property within, they merely fill up the entrance with brushwood arranged in a peculiar manner, and leave it without any other protection whatever. Moreover we were informed, that although the removal of the brushwood would be an easy matter, yet that no case was known of the sanctity of a storehouse so sealed having been violated. Travellers intending to ascend Um Shaumur will probably be disposed, if they have no tents with them, to pass the night under the shelter, such as it is, of this resting-place; but if they have brought tents with them, they will do better to push on about an hour and a half further, and encamp in a small lateral valley, the "Wady Zeitúneh," so called from an ancient olive-tree (probably the only one for many miles round) which stands not far from its entrance. The particular advantage of the place for encampment is, that close to the tree there is a well of tolerable water. And here it may be added, that along the whole route, from the Convent of St. Catherine to this spot, no other water is passed, with the exception of a very indifferent spring some distance to the north of the resting-place in the Wady Rahabeh.

Supposing, however, for the present that we start in the morning from the resting-place in the Wady Rahabeh, a walk of an hour and a half over a low ridge, and along the bed of a narrow winding valley floored with deep sand and gravel, brings us to the top of the corrie at its upper end, from whence, on the further side, we obtain a view of the more eastern portion of Um Shaumur. The way to the mountain, however, does not yet lie straight before us. The ravine in front is so deep and difficult to traverse that it is advisable, if not absolutely necessary, to make rather a long circuit by some still higher and much steeper ridges to the westward. A stiff climb of an hour and a quarter up to and along these ridges brings us to a point from which the whole of the northern face of Um Shaumur is visible from top to bottom. The view of Um Shaumur from this point is very striking, the whole mountain being nearly sheer precipice with the exception of a gully below the central peak filled with scattered fragments of every size, from masses weighing many tons to small stones. The said gully is an important feature in the mountain; for by it alone, as far as we could see, are the higher parts to be approached. Before commencing the ascent of Um Shaumur proper, it is necessary to descend some thousand feet to a narrow neck or isthmus of rock connecting the hill on which we stand with the main body of the mountain. Both on the east and west sides of the neck are very deep and narrow ravines; and but little reflection is here required to convince one that Um Shaumur could not well have been the "Mount of the Law," as some have conjectured it to be. For, independently of its lying so much out of the probable track of the Israelites, there is not room in the crevasse-like ravines which surround its base for any large number of people to encamp. In the gorge on the western side of the neck are the ruins of the old chapel or convent of St. Antony, and near it there flows a stream of excellent water having its source high up in the gully above.

Having at length reached the base of Um Shaumur itself, we now commence a scramble over or round or under the various fragments of rock which choke the gully by which, as already stated, our ascent must be made; and after about an hour's steady climbing, but without any real difficulty, we reach the central peak. To this point several travellers have ascended before us; and it is a little higher up that *the* difficulty of the mountain occurs. The

huge masses of syenite which support the western summit are so precipitous as to be, at first sight at least, quite insurmountable without the aid of a ladder. But on further inspection the perpendicular face of one of the largest of these buttresses is found to be rent from top to bottom by a fissure of some width indeed at the aperture, but gradually contracting until there is barely room for a man to turn or even to stand in it. On the floor of this part of the fissure there is an accumulation of detritus which raises us just within reach of a small ledge or shelf formed by a few stones which have fallen from above and stuck fast between the lateral faces of rock. To this ledge it is necessary to worm oneself up as one best can. There is no room for a spring or other display of gymnastic activity, and the smooth sides of rock afford no hold for booted feet. In our case, however, the lean and wiry Arab who acted as our guide, having divested himself of his sandals and other impedimenta, saved much time and trouble by first screwing himself up to the ledge, and then giving my friend and myself a hand, which slight aid was all that was required. I may, however, here remark, that on mountains like Um Shaumur the possession of a rope, if not always necessary, is at least desirable by way of precaution. The ledge once gained, a few minutes more scramble placed us on the summit of Um Shaumur; the first Europeans, we believe, who have scaled this the highest point of the Sinaitic peninsula. As probably Um Shaumur is surmountable only by the way I have described, it is possible that former travellers have been baffled by not finding the fissure in the Hagar-el-Bint; or perhaps the ledge itself by which we ascended is the result of a fall of stones which has taken place since the mountain was last attempted. The view from the summit of Um Shaumur is extremely grand. We have first, from north-west to north-east, a sea of jagged peaks and bare rugged hills of dark-red granite and syenite, shut in in the distance by Serbál, Katherin, Músa; and other mountains of the Sinai range; while more towards the east the eye ranges across the Gulf of Akaba to the lofty mountains of Arabia. On the south again, or rather the south-east, the ridge on which we stand is continued with more or less interruption of its deeply-serrated outline until it ceases at the Cape "Rás Mohammed." Turning westward, at some little distance, not immediately at our feet, we discern the plain of Ka'a', extending to the shore of the Gulf of Suez; and further off, beyond an expanse of deepest blue, the high and sometimes sharp-topped mountains of Africa stretching away in the distant horizon.

The mountains of the southern part of the peninsula of Sinai consist of coarse-grained granite and syenite, both occasionally porphyritic, and weathering for the most part into a dark-red colour. These coarse rocks are, however, sometimes traversed by veins of red felspathic syenite of much finer grain, and also by veins of greyish-white quartz; but dykes and outpourings of trap are much more frequent than either. In the detritus along the hillsides and valleys I observed great quantities of yellow mica, together with specimens of tourmaline, augite, prehnite, &c. But our visit was of too cursory a nature to admit of a minute examination of the geology, geography, or otherwise of the Peninsula. I may, however, state in conclusion, that in the red sandstone region abutting the granite district on the north, and lying generally between it and the limestone range of Et-Tíh is abundance of iron and copper; and not only so, but there are in several localities traces of extensive works having been carried on for the extraction of both these metals. More especially is this the case in the neighbourhood of the hill called "Surabit-el-Kadim." A thorough exploration of the wadies there would probably not only show that the history of the peninsula is not to be confined to the few years of its occupation by the Israelites, but would at the same time do much to clear up the mystery which still hangs over the question of Sinaitic inscriptions. I might say a good deal more on this subject; but, as it is difficult to separate the results of my own observations from information which I received, I feel that

it is not fair towards the gentleman who gave me that information, and whose hospitality in the desert I gratefully acknowledge, to anticipate in any way the publication of discoveries which rightfully belong to him, and which, I trust, he will himself ere long communicate to the world.

11.—*Account of the Ascent of the Camaroons Mountain, in Western Africa.* By Captain RICHARD BURTON, H.B.M. Consul at Fernando Po, Gold Medallist. (Communicated by the FOREIGN OFFICE.)

Consul Burton to Earl Russell.

Fernando Po, February 22, 1862.

MY LORD,—I have the honour to report that I have made two ascents of the hitherto unexplored Camaroons Mountain, and have discovered a magnificent site for a sanitarium, a convict station, or a negro colony. I have enclosed a report, to be forwarded, if your Lordship thinks proper, to the Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society.

I have, &c., (Signed) RICHD. F. BURTON.

(Enclosure.)

A Reconnaissance of "Theon Ochema," Camaroons Mountain.

“Τέτταρας δ' ἡμέρας φερόμενοι, νυκτὸς τὴν γῆν ἀφεωρώμεν φλογὸς μεστήν. Ἐν μέσῳ δ' ἦν ἠλιβατόντι πῦρ τῶν ἄλλων μείζον ἀπτόμενον, ὡς ἐδόκει, τῶν ἄστρον. Τοῦτο δ' ἡμέρας ὕρος ἐφαίνετο μέγιστον Θεῶν ὄχημα καλούμενον.

“Post cursum dierum quatuor, noctu terram conspiciebamus flammis refertam. In medio autem erat excelsus quidam et ceteris major ignis, ipsa, uti videbatur, tangens astra. *Is interdū apparuit esse mons altissimus, qui Theon Ochema vocatur.*”

[This remarkable passage in Hanno's 'Periplus,' chap. 16, is to be explained only by the firing of the grass and the burning solfaterra on the Camaroons Mountain.]

THE Royal Geographical Society may, at first sight, not be disposed to think much of an exploration which appears only to have reached a mountain district 14 miles of direct, and 21 of indirect distance from the sea. But a little knowledge of the subject gives another view of it. Water is often wanting; provisions are never to be found on these tropical heights. The wild people are a notoriously bad, though cowardly race, and everywhere, as the late expedition to Kilimanjaro proves, if such proof be required, savages are unwilling to see their mountains ascended for the first time. Add to this, that the only escort in these lands must be krooboys—sturdy fellows, but the most arrant poltroons. They hate land-work; they mangle by inducing sore feet; they run away; and at the best of times they are fond, as Murphy is, of depending on Pat to ask Corny to think about coming some day and help to carry a small bundle of straw to repair the roof.

For nearly four centuries this magnificent pile of mountains, the “Theon Ochema” of Hanno and Pliny has been looming before the eyes of the passing European mariner, yet the summit has been ever virgin. Two attempts have lately been made. In 1847 a Mr. Merrick, of the Baptist Mission on the Camaroons River, succeeded in emerging from the forest into the open grassy levels. But pure water failed him; his people suffered from cold and thirst, and he was compelled to return. Two years afterwards he died. In 1860, M. Gustav Mann, a young Hanoverian botanist, travelling and collecting in West Africa under the patronage of Sir William Hooker, ascended a few hundred feet, when press of time persuaded him to stop. Here, then, remained for me a mountain whose “glorious pinnacle never yet felt the foot of man.”

Geographically speaking, the Camaroons Mountain is a parallelogram laying